

### *Says Lifting Travel Ban Would Bail out Castro with Regime on the Ropes*

Washington, D.C. –U.S. Rep. Tom Rooney (R-Fla.) today said that approval by the House Agriculture Committee of a bill to lift the travel ban on Cuba “sends mixed messages about our commitment to the brave pro-democracy movement in Cuba.”

“I’m very disappointed that the Agriculture Committee approved a bill to lift the travel ban on Cuba and prop up the Castro regime without any human rights concessions,” Rooney said. “Lifting the travel ban would inject millions of dollars into the Cuban government at a time when the Castro regime is on the ropes.”

“At this juncture, lifting the ban would amount to yet another bailout – only this time, we’d be bailing out a brutal dictatorship on the brink of collapsing.”

Rooney noted that Cuba’s foreign trade declined by a third in the last year, the country is several billion dollars in debt to sovereign lenders, and its economic crisis is putting Castro’s rule in jeopardy.

Rooney said he was “very disappointed” that Committee Democrats blocked consideration of his amendment to strike the provision of the bill that lifts the travel ban. Democrats also refused to consider his amendment to require that Castro restore property rights before the travel ban could be lifted.

“How can anyone honestly say now is the time to ignore all that has happened in Cuba?” Rooney asked. “We should keep the travel ban and trade embargo in place, and send a message to the next generation of Cuban leaders after the Castros: they can continue a defeated evil regime, or be welcomed as a free nation with the United States as partner.”

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